

THE

695. n 13

REQUISITION OF SUBSCRIPTION

TO THE

Thirty-nine Articles and Liturgy of the Church of
England

NOT INCONSISTENT WITH CHRISTIAN LIBERTY:

A

S E R M O N.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED

REASONS AGAINST SUBSCRIBING A PETITION TO PAR-
LIAMENT FOR THE ABOLITION OF SUCH
SUBSCRIPTION.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR W. FLEXNEY, OPPOSITE GRAY'S-INN-GATE,
HOLBORN. M DCC LXXI.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]



REASONS AGAINST SUBSCRIBING A PETITION TO
PARLIAMENT FOR THE ABOLITION OF SUB-
SCRIPTION TO THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES
AND LITURGY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

AS the following Discourse was preached some years ago, its publication at this distance of time, may require an apology. The author did not want inducements to venture it abroad, when it was first delivered from the pulpit: but he was happy to see the argument in abler Hands; and would never have obtruded the trifle on the Public, had not a recent occasion called it forth.

He was lately invited to an association held at the Feathers Tavern in the Strand, there to subscribe a petition to parliament for the abolition of subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles and Liturgy of the Church of England. If he were not in the number of those who think our ecclesiastical constitution altogether unexceptionable, he would at least be apt rather to distrust his own judgment, than with

a mad temerity to cry aloud for the subversion of a national establishment ; and nothing less than this seem the promoters of the present Petition, a petition for the *total* abolition of subscription, to have in view. To pull down a structure, the boast and admiration of ages, because an angle hurt our eye, or a pillar seem to deform the edifice it is intended to strengthen and adorn, especially when it is a doubtful disputable point, whether that angle be a real blemish, or this pillar be not necessary to the building's support, favours more of Pagan rage than Christian humility. From the general knowledge he has of mankind, he has been ever induced to think the bulk of the people, and many of their teachers too, very incompetent judges of the nicer points of religion ; and from thence to infer the necessity of a religious establishment, and the expediency of some line, as well to regulate the doctrines of the one, as to form the opinions of the other. From the enquiry he had made into the doctrinal parts of Christianity, he hath always esteemed the mode of worship established in the Church of England preferable to any other ; and the line, with which our wise and good Reformers circumscribed that Church, drawn with consummate judgment and great integrity : such invitation therefore could not have been more unfortunately address.

The author hath read with great attention the reasons alledged for the intended petition. Some of them betray the principles of the as-

sociates

sociates too clearly, to interest a real member of the Church of England in the success of it: Some contain insinuations that redound not much to the honour or honesty of the petitioners: and others carry such a degree of absurdity on the face of them, as proves them dictated only by the spirit of cavil.

One reason alledged for the abolition of subscription is, that the requisition of it “*derives* upon the *most zealous* friends of religion the reproaches of intolerant and bigotted brethren.” Pray, Gentlemen of the Church of England, who are those *most zealous* friends of religion you are so mighty zealous to screen from reproaches? Who are those *many valuable members* of whom, as another reason for the abolition of subscription, we are told “the church is deprived; who, on account of her exerting her authority in matters of faith, have thought themselves under a necessity of departing from her communion?” Or, if you will not tell us for whom all this tenderness and anxiety is express; for the sake of whose admission the walls of the church are to be pulled down; examine their principles, then look back a little into the annals of English history, and at least tell us, whether such *valuable members*, such *zealous friends of religion*, have any claim to so great complaisance from the Church of England.

But it seems the members of the Church of England are themselves aggrieved in the requisition of subscription; which “subjects the

professors of Christianity to the charge of insincerity and prevarication, in so subscribing or declaring their unfeigned assent to the Articles." With what degree of justice and of truth such a charge may be urged against the petitioners, the impartial public will determine; indeed the petitioners themselves have already determined. If there be others to whom such a charge can be objected; more shame to them: candour will induce us to think the number small.

" It may be demanded of us, (say the petitioners,) to assign our reasons for petitioning redress *at this particular period*.—It is answered, that as the grievances we complain of are peculiarly our own, so they have been acknowledged and proclaimed, long before the commencement of *the present dissensions in the state*; and that the promoters of this attempt to remove them, disclaim all *other* reasons and motives for coming forth in support of this cause, *which* do not immediately arise from a sense of duty." Why do the petitioners with such officious sedulity answer objections, before they are urged; objections, that otherwise never might have been urged? Who would have supposed the petitioning scheme, the contrivance of some artful busy head, calculated to try how far the complexion of the times, whose turbulence hath already endeavoured to shake our civil, would countenance an attack on our religious polity; had not the promoters of it alarmed us by declaring, That was not the case. Such voluntary declaration of innocence, ere you are charged with guilt, gives a very

unfavourable impression: it argues a consciousness, either that the design has a bad appearance, or doth really proceed from bad motives. The reader will assign to it which construction he pleases.

Now comes the most capital reason for the abolition of subscription, that ever was urged: that the requisition of subscription to the Articles and Liturgy of the Church of England "tends in that very Church to produce divisions." This reasoning, 'tis presumed, is founded on the old observation, *In vetitum ruit*. Accordingly, if you would bring the teachers of Religion to regulate their doctrines according to certain common established points of faith; the sure way to effect this is, to give them full licence to publish doctrines, as widely different, as wild, and as fantastical, as they please.

If the reader be curious to see any more of the reasons offered by the associates in favour of their intended petition, he is referred to their own proposals. And, to deal with candour, if they cannot be acknowledged altogether so satisfactory as might be wished; it must be confessed, they are not altogether without their weight. It must be owned, the abolition contended for, would be a great relief to the *consciences* of those *honest* men; who, captivated by the lure of the Church of England's emoluments, have subscribed their belief in, their assent to articles, in which they are not ashamed publickly to tell the world, they do not believe, to which they *ex animo* do not assent. It might likewise be convenient enough for those *honester* men, whose

consciences are formed of less pliable materials ; who would be glad to squeeze into the Church, if any friendly hand would open the door wide enough, or pull down the wall of partition. As an argument, however, of acquiescence to these, 'tis asserted ; that if the poor distressed state of nine-tenths of the clergy of the established Church was duly considered, theirs, with regard to this world's good, would appear no enviable condition.

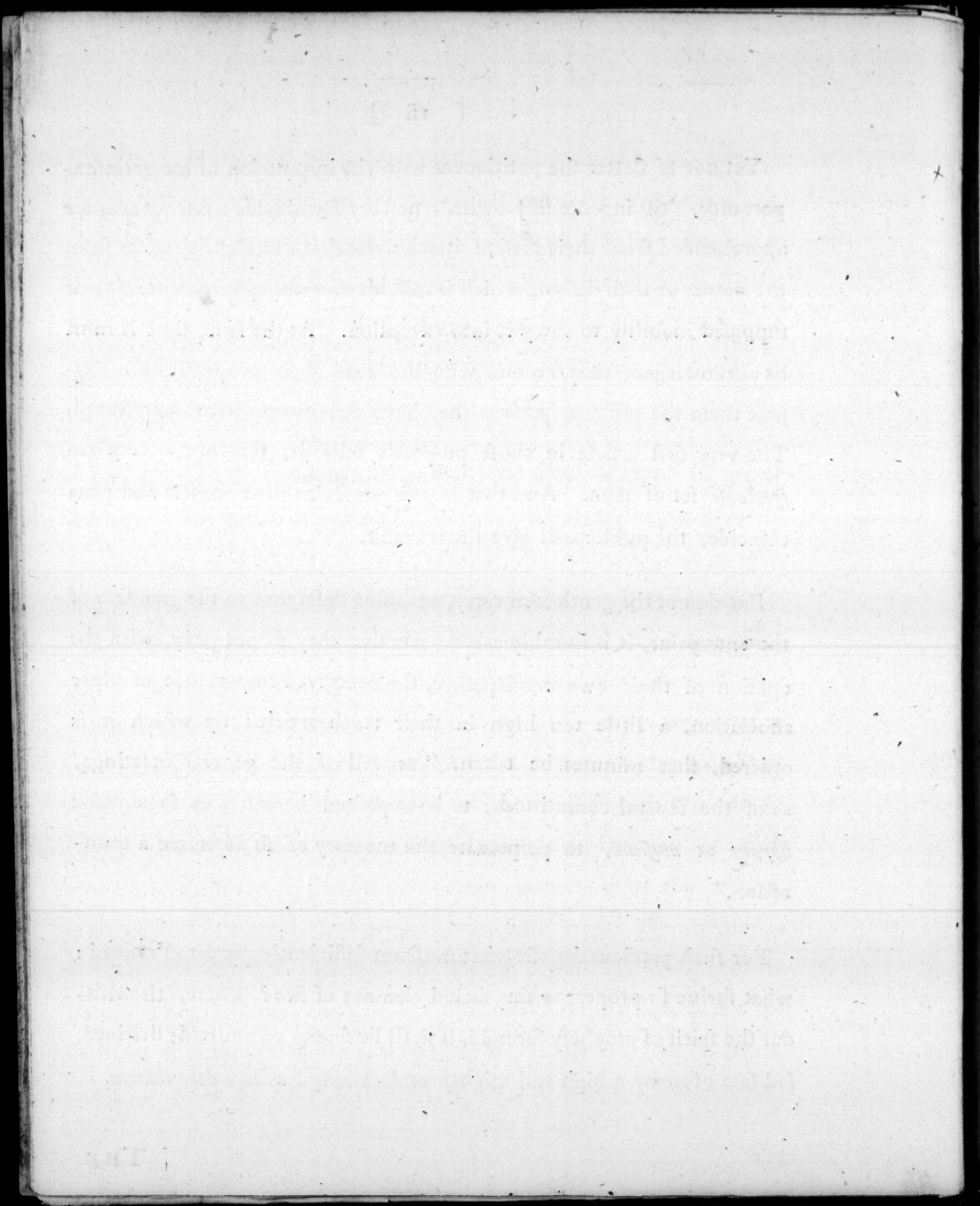
Should reasons, however, such as these, be acknowledged points of moment with certain individuals, they are at best no points of general concern : not important enough to justify an attempt to subvert our constitution. For the petitioners must be very ignorant of the annals of past, and entertain a very high opinion of the passive temper of the present times ; if they can suppose the establishment of a national Church can be overturned without much confusion : if they can flatter themselves, that such an innovation as this, with which they *begin* their attack on the constitution of the English Church, can be brought about, without many a hardy struggle on the part of those who conscientiously regulate their doctrines according to the articles, they, without *subterfuge* and *prevarication*, subscribed. No exceptions to particular articles, or parts of the Liturgy are made ; no alterations are proposed ; and the proposals for application to parliament for the abolition of subscription are conceived in such loose and general terms, as evince it to be only a prelude to deeper designs ; a foundation whereon to build a more dangerous superstructure.

Yet

Yet not to flatter the petitioners with the imputation of too great importance, 'tis ingenuously owned, no very formidable consequences are apprehended from their present attack: not that our security arises from the nature of their design, which is mischievous enough; but from their supposed inability to carry it into execution. At the same time it must be acknowledged, that no one who has read their proposals, can suppose them the obscure persons they have sometimes been represented. The very first article in those proposals tells us, they are a very *respectable* set of men. And that in *this particular* their hearts and pens coincide, the public will give them credit.

But do not the gentlemen carry, with due deference to the grandeur of the enterprize, it is humbly asked; whether they do not carry, with the opinion of their own consequence, the conceived importance of their association, a little too high in their tenth article? by which it is ordered, that minutes be taken, "as well of the general meetings, as of the several committees; to be deposited hereafter in some *public library* or *museum*, to perpetuate the memory of so *important* a transaction."

For such precious deposit what museum sufficiently pure and refined: what shrine so proper as the sacred element of fire? There, 'tis without the spirit of prophesy foretold, it shall be finally committed; destined, sad fate of many a high and mighty undertaking! *ex luce dare fumum.*



THE REQUISITION OF SUBSCRIPTION TO THE
THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES AND LITURGY OF
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND NOT INCONSISTENT
WITH CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

GALLATIANS Chap. v. Ver. 1.

Stand fast in that Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

NEVER have words been occasionally more misapplied than those ; more industriously wrested from their plain and obvious sense, and more frequently prostituted to sinister purposes. This Liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free, is, if we credit some men, a licence to propagate, under the pretext of Religion, every extravagance a wild imagination may suggest. And in whatever degree this licence is restrained, that liberty they hold abridged. They believe, or at least feign to believe, the Christian Religion the only pure Religion, the one true Revelation : they wish, or at least feign to wish, the practice of it universal : yet, liberal men ! they would have all teachers of Religion left at large, to propagate, as they please, the doctrines which every distempered imagination may call the doctrines of Christ. But such men seem as little acquainted with the principles of sound Policy, as with the doctrines of Christianity.

These reflections have been suggested to me by a late public attack on the establishment of our religious Polity ; in which the author argues against religious subscriptions of all kinds : and, if he be not inconsistent with himself, against all religious establishments. I shall therefore take occasion in this discourse to inquire, 1st, How far the right, which government assumes of requiring subscription from those who are appointed teachers of Religion, is consistent with Christian Liberty : and 2dly, Whether the line drawn in the subscription required by the Church of England, lays any unjustifiable constraint on the consciences of real Christians.

But, as this plea of Christian or Evangelical Liberty has been made the pretext of many a dark design, it will be proper previously to determine, in what Christian Liberty, in the plain and obvious meaning of the Gospel, doth really consist. It primarily implies a freedom from that heavy burthen of useless ceremonies, with which the judaizing proselytes to Christianity would have all Christians charged. We find it directly expressed, or alluded to, in more than forty passages in the New Testament : sometimes, in a more loose and general acceptation, it signifies an emancipation from the bondage of sin ; it sometimes imports a freedom, as it is termed, *από νομού τού θανατού*, but never, as far as I can find, an exemption from the laws of the land. Obedience to the civil powers I find enjoined by Christ himself, both by precept and example : nor doth Christianity contain any doctrines that render it unfit for union with civil government. Christian Liberty doth indeed indulge us in our own private opinions of points, upon which Scripture hath not expressly decided ; but Christian Liberty doth not authorize every idle dreamer to vent the wild flights of a distempered imagination in direct opposition to the civil powers, and the mode of Christianity, established in the state. Christianity doth

not

not countenance this ; reason condemns it ; sound policy disclaims it. But this will be more clearly evinced in considering the first article of our inquiry ; viz. how far the right, which government assumes of requiring subscription from those who are appointed teachers of Religion, is consistent with Christian Liberty.

A sense of Religion few will deny to have been implanted in the mind of man even from the beginning. For there is no room, either from history or tradition, to suppose it was reasoned out : produced in process of time by dint of thought, or reach of imagination. It was therefore prior to civil government : or it is reasonable to suppose it to have been, had mankind continued in their original state of innocence, the only government ; and the law of conscience the universal law of man. But sin once admitted into the world, made so large and hasty strides, that the influence of Religion was found insufficient to guard against vice, and to promote the practice of social and moral virtue. Hence appeared the necessity of enacting laws, and thereto annexing a sanction of temporal rewards and punishments. Such was the institution of civil government ; at first, we may suppose, a set of plain simple rules of conducting ourselves in society ; not superseding, not independent of, Religion ; but intimately connected with, and enforcing the practice of it. Benevolence, gratitude, mercy, and the like virtues, all eminently necessary to the well-being of society, civil laws cannot sufficiently provide for and maintain : they cannot secure society against the breach of those duties, because these are points to which they cannot extend : so far therefore they are insufficient to maintain the repose of society, the preservation of which is the object of civil government.

Consider farther, how deeply is selfishness rooted in human nature : and who can be ignorant that the gross of mankind, if freed from all other restraint but that of the civil power, in order to serve their own interest, their pleasure, or profits, would rarely stop at villainy, when occasion complaisantly provoked to the secret commiffion of it, when they could safely say, *No man seeth me*. Hence every wise legislator, every one who pretended to legislation, saw in Religion the basis and cement of government ; they saw plainly the civil power could not subsist in force without it : a truth this so universally acknowledged, that we know of no state that ever did subsist independent of a doctrine of future rewards and punishments. The subsistence of a state so unsupported would be nothing less than a miracle. Nor let it be from hence inferred, that Religion is a mere state engine : a consciousness of the being and attributes of God, of our own immortality, and of a future retribution of rewards and punishments, wise men saw strongly implanted in the human mind, by the author of human nature ; and for the purposes of government availed themselves of it. A doctrine, so essential to the welfare of the community, was to be kept up by certain forms and ceremonies ; and learned and prudent men were appointed to inculcate those beneficial truths. And this amounts to what we understand by an established Religion.

The first principles of Religion were plain and simple ; the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and a future retribution of rewards and punishments. Yet was it in a very short space of time exhibited in so various modes, that it scarce appeared the same thing. The case was, Religion being found so necessary to the support of government became incorporated with it ; and the religious and civil policy being thus united, the complexion of Religion partook of that

of the state. And the religious polity, thus grown together with, and moulded into that of the state, from that time becomes so intimately connected with it, that their interests are common; each wants the influence of the other to preserve its peace, and to support its power. Reflections these, which may induce us to think, that as the form of civil government at home, and in our colonies, is much the same, the same general establishment of Religion is necessary: it would tend to promote that harmony between us, that is greatly wanted, and bind us each to the other by new ties, and a stricter union *.

Religious and civil polity thus considered, it necessarily follows, that as the mode of civil government was, in some measure, peculiar to each state, so also was the mode of Religion. Hence I think it may be observed, that in the more rude and uncivilized states, Religion was more simple; more complicated, in the more polished and refined ones: in absolute monarchies it appeared more adorned with ceremonies, splendid, and pompous; in republics more nude and plain; in

C

thoſe

* The members of the Church of England in America, with great reason complain, that theirs is the only Christian Church in all that quarter of the world, that is precluded the full and free exercise of the Religion they profess: and it is matter of surprise, that, contrary to every motive of sound Polity and Religion, the Dissenters have hitherto had influence enough with government to withhold the national Church from the full and free enjoyment of the national Religion. Some of the clergy of the province of Virginia, on behalf of themselves and their congregations, very lately presented a petition to government for an American bishop. The Dissenters took the alarm, represented the petition as a manœuvre of government, prevailed on certain of the clergy to remonstrate against it, and, as a spur to every future opponent that may signalize himself against the established church, voted them general thanks for their opposition. In supposing this petition was a manœuvre of government, in believing government could be so very strongly interested in sending a bishop into America, 'tis plain, they acknowledge it, in a political light, as an expedient of great utility to government. This is a concession the Dissenters were not aware of: it is a truth however, which every body knows.

those a greater uniformity in Religion was necessary ; in these a greater latitude might without prejudice be indulged. These marks, to which more might be added, indicate the form of Government and Religion in a state to be so closely connected, so mutually dependent each on the other ; that it is necessary for those, scrupulously to guard the one, who hope to secure the other.

That the affair was considered in this light by heathen magistrates, we have many instances in proof. How severe and strict were the laws of Greece against those who propagated doctrines repugnant to the established Religion of the state, the magistracy of Athens determined ; when they arraigned, tried, condemned, and executed the wise, the virtuous Socrates upon this information, being able to find none other accusation against him. How strong a security to civil government those Grecians esteemed religious polity, and how jealous they were of any invasion of religious rights, the Phocian or sacred war demonstrates.

By jealousies such as these, individuals may have been aggrieved : but private grievances must submit to general good. We cannot doubt the right of government most scrupulously to guard, and preserve religious institutions ; which when intimately blended and incorporated with the form of civil polity, are its best security, and strongest barrier against intestine feuds and civil commotions : And no means are so essentially necessary to this end, as the infliction of punishment on those who propagate doctrines repugnant to the institutions so received and established ? Government has ever assumed a power to do this : and I see no reason to controvert its right. For the compact between the legislature and the people is mutual ; that is, to preserve these secure in their persons and property ; and these are, on the other hand,

hand, bound to submit to the authority of that, to pay a dutiful obedience to its prohibitions and commands.

Such seems to have been the case of religious and civil polity in Pagan states. At length Christianity appeared : a sketch of Religion, most pure, most perfect ; the precepts of which were strictly moral ; the doctrines of which placed in the clearest and strongest light the first great, though in the various Pagan institutions corrupted and almost extinguished, principles of true Religion : they likewise further revealed the dispensations of God to man, and laid open certain secret mysteries, that had long laid buried in the womb of time, in a manner so explicit, and with authority so incontestable, as mankind was, till then, unacquainted with. A Religion, tending in so eminent a manner to promote the social and moral virtues, to render us affectionate parents, dutiful children, faithful friends, and worthy citizens, could never be esteemed at variance with the interests of mankind ; but doth in its own nature manifestly contribute both to public and private good. Wherever, therefore, the nature of Christianity was properly understood, it was received, encouraged, established. An order of men was appointed, to instruct the people in it ; and, as the best things are most liable to be abused, to watch over, and guard it from errors and corruption. And thus established by the authority, it was supported by the arm of the civil magistrate ; and, in return, co-operated with, and strengthened his power. From that time their interests became the same : and the support of each was essential to the other. You cannot strike the one, but the other will feel the blow. To corrupt the doctrines of Religion, and wrest aside its precepts, would be to sap the main pillar of government. Hence the necessity of some security from those, to whose trust the charge of Religion is committed, that they will observe pure and uncorrupt the Religion as

by law established: and hence the right the civil magistrate hath to demand such security as shall appear to him most effectual.

Indeed it is highly ridiculous to dispute the right of the magistrate to require such security, where the laws have given him a power to do it. But not only the power, and the right, but the propriety of requiring such security is most apparent. If you do not circumscribe the teachers within some bounds, their doctrines will soon become opposite as pole to pole. Men of heated imaginations and weak judgment, and such there must be among every class of men, will be eternally striking out into new paths. Men of such complexion will be more studious to frame a novelty, than to propagate a truth; and novelty is so alluring, that it will ever be greedily embraced. Error will be grafted on error. Parties will be formed, divisions in the state will follow those in Religion, and discord and confusion ruin both.

The usual reply to this is, had such doctrine prevailed two or three hundred years ago, what would have become of our boasted Reformation? In answer to which it will be sufficient to refer our adversaries to a retrospect of that Reformation. Let them look back on those intestine feuds, and civil broils, on those dreadful scenes that a long course of years presented, the state almost torn to pieces, and the land deluged with blood; ere the wished-for Reformation could be effectually established: then let them dispassionately determine whether any thing, but the grossest errors, offensive to the great object of Religion, or injurious to the state, can justify innovations in religious establishments, productive of evils so severely felt as those.

It were unnecessary to dwell longer on so clear a point; for little more was requisite to determine the question proposed, than to place it in a proper

proper light. It seems as necessary, considered merely in a political light, that the state should demand some security of the commissioned teachers of Religion, for their conformity to the Religion established in it, as that it should have any Religion at all. I hasten, therefore, to the next subject of consideration which is, "whether the line drawn "in the subscription required by the constitution of England, lays ~~any~~ "unjustifiable constraint on the consciences of real Christians."

In order to this, let us cast back our eyes on that ever memorable time, when the clouds of error were dispersed, and the pure Religion of Christ shone forth in our land with original lustre. To secure rational Christianity from the errors and abuses of Popery, or any others that might be as dangerous to its internal purity as those; to guard it from the designs of libertine and fanatical, as well as crafty and ambitious men; and to transmit pure to their posterity so invaluable a blessing; a certain form was composed, comprehending articles of religious and civil import: an assent to which was required of those who should be ordained to a charge of so great importance as that of instructing the nation in religious and moral duties. And what did those articles comprehend? An exposition of certain passages in Scripture, understood in their plain and obvious sense; and a declaration of certain points in our civil establishment, as matters of indispensable obligation: each tending, and highly necessary, to promote union in Church and State. But who were the men, by whom this form of articles, and the structure of that Liturgy we bind ourselves to observe, were composed? By whom was executed so important a commission? By men, for learning and abilities, for moderation and candor, unexceptionable. Men, so free from prejudice, that, at the risk of every thing that is usually held most dear, they renounced the erroneous doctrines and practice in which education had trained them

up, and which custom and example had made familiar to them: Men, so uninfluenced by any worldly lure, that they shewed themselves most regardless of every temporal advantage they might in peace and quietness have enjoyed, when incompatible with the glorious truths of the Gospel: Men, who, as guardians of those great truths, were so firm to their purposes and trust, so unmoved by menaces and torture, that they signed the invaluable legacy with their blood. Yet might not these men err in their exposition of certain points of doctrine, abstruse mysterious points? Great and good as they were, had they been secure from error they had been more than men.

Of this they themselves were sensible; so well were they acquainted with human nature, they knew it was as impossible to bring all men to the same absolute belief in all doubtful points, as to reduce them to the same stature. The complexions of the mind are as various as those of the body; and you may bring these to one and the same colour, just as easily as you can the other. If sound arguments properly urged will not conciliate an uniformity of belief in disputable points; all other means must fail. Considering, therefore, the acknowledged fallibility of men, the known impracticability of making all men think upon all doubtful articles exactly alike, our great reformers, such was their judgment, never expected men, either by the authority of councils or churches, could be brought to this; such was their moderation, they never required that in all minute points of unedifying disputation they should be bound to it.

The truth of this we shall be abundantly convinced of, if we examine as well the spirit as the letter of the 19th, 20th, and 21st articles of Faith. The first of these we find asserting, "that churches have " erred;" the second asserts, that "it is not lawful for churches to " teach

" teach any thing repugnant to Scripture, or any thing more than is declared in Scripture, as necessary to salvation :" the last of these articles declares, that " councils also have erred, and that if they " ordain any thing beyond what Scripture appoints as necessary to " salvation, no regard is to be paid to them."

The thirty-nine articles are general declarations of certain doctrines founded on the express authority of Scripture : and as some of them refer to difficult disputable points, by the above-cited articles, every one is indulged a degree of latitude in his interpretation of them. To the general declarations contained in the articles, and to them only, is our assent required : and if ever they descend to a more particular explication of those general doctrines, though such expositions do not in every minute article, in the same determinate use of every word, suit understandings of every size (and it would be as great a miracle as ever Christ wrought if they did) no reasonable exception can surely from thence be admitted against the general points of doctrine contained in them ; nor can a refusal of assent to them, in those who desire to be enrolled amongst the ministers of the Gospel, appear in any degree justifiable.

If then it be asked of what use are those minutiae, why do they descend to explications of general doctrines ; the comprehension of which appears to many beyond the reach of unassisted reason ? 'Tis replied, to prevent, as far as may be, the folly and ignorance of illiterate and fanatical teachers, and some such without a continued miracle we must expect, from deforming the sacred truths with their own private wild and distant explications : if every one was indulged *his psalm, his doctrine, his tongue, his revelation, his interpretation* ; what a goodly system of Christianity would such dissonance of doctrines produce ! In a word, if those articles of Faith, as drawn up by our great

great and good Reformers, be not in every minute point exactly true; we may venture to say, they approach nearer the truth than any standard set up by private judgment: and in matters, where we cannot arrive at exact truth, the nearest approach to it will satisfy a rational inquirer.

Disappointed ambition may wish to throw things into confusion; which, flowing on in their wonted channel, afford pride no prospect of much importance: and some may hope to palm on the world an affectation of thinking singularly, for an appearance of thinking deeply: but were the articles freed from all the embarrassments of *analyses, expositions, examinations, vindications, &c.* with which they are so grievously charged; duly weighing the design of them, as set forth in the royal declaration prefixt, properly regarding the spirit as well as letter of them, and considering the form of subscription required, no sufficient reason appears, to influence the honest man, of plain good sense, to refuse his assent to them. Some barrier we must have, or sectaries of all denominations, sceptics and infidels, even those dreaded Arminians and Papists themselves will pour in upon us; we must, sooner or later, fall a sacrifice to our divisions, and that head of the reformed Church, that glory of Protestantism, the Church of England, may be sought for in England. Indeed a juster line than that already drawn by our great Reformers, I cannot find, the author alluded to has determined for us: liberal-minded man, he would throw the inclosure open. Let the Church of England, says he, "remove every stumbling-block out of the way of her weak but conscientious fellow Christians: let her nobly and generously abolish, and disavow all impositions, all bonds and yokes:" that is, neither more nor less than, let the Church of England cease to be a Church.

And

And for whom is all this condescension pleaded? For our weak brethren, men of tender consciences, who complain they are abridged of that Liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free. With what hostile rage, with what implacable fury such tender-conscienced men, banding together prosecuted Government and Religion, how lately did this country afford a lamentable instance! Such as I trust will make our wise and provident governors ever jealous of such insidious pleas.

Indeed this author doth too sensibly touch our memory with the recollection of those things he should rather wish buried in oblivion, and unwarily puts us on our guard. The same wretched plea of weak brethren, tender consciences, and Christian Liberty, the same evil-speaking of dignities, the same virulence and rancour against our present establishment, distinguish his page; that characterised the factious orators and leaders of those disastrous times; whose baneful influence brought a pious monarch to the block, and overturned both Church and State.

A repetition of the crimes that blackened those days, the confusion and anarchy which then reigned in this devoted land, that we may never live to see; but hand down to our posterity, pure and inviolate, that excellent constitution in Church and State, which, purchased by many struggles, our pious ancestors transmitted to us; may Almighty God, of his infinite mercy grant, through the merits of Christ Jesus our Lord: to whom, &c.

Just published, with Additions,

A new Edition of LETTERS
On the NATURE and ORIGIN of EVIL.

Addressed to SOAMES JENYNS, Esq;

Printed for W. FLEXNEY, opposite Gray's-Inn-Gate,
Holborn.



